

THE PRINCIPAL FIGURES OF "CONFUCIANISM" IN MEDIEVAL AND LATE-IMPERIAL TIMES

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A. T'ANG (TANG) 唐 DYNASTY CONFUCIAN THINKERS

Han Yü 韓愈 (768-829):

Criticized Buddhism, classical Taoist texts, and Hsün-tzu (Xünzi 荀子).

Praised Mencius (Mengzi 孟子).

Used the *Ta-hsüeh* (*Daxue* 大學) and *Chung-yung* (*Zhongyong* 中庸).

Instigated later Confucians' antipathy toward the other Chinese value-systems.

Li Ao 李翱 (ca. 772-833):

Author of the "*Book on Returning to Our True Nature*"--*Fu-hsing shu* (*Fuxing shu* 復性書)

Thought: based on the *Chung-yung*. Also influenced by T'ang Taoist thought and by T'ien-t'ai / Tiantai 天台 Buddhist theory. In T'ang times, Li was typical of Confucians' views.

B. EARLY SUNG (SONG) 宋 DYNASTY CONFUCIAN THINKERS (11th Century)

Shao Yung (Shao Yong 邵雍; 1011-1077; Not "recognized" by Chu Hsi):

Cosmological theory: the universe evolved out of *shen* 神 ("**Spirit**" / "spiritual consciousness") and *shu* 數 ("enumerative principle"); *greatly influenced all* the theorists below

Chou Tun-i (Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤; 1017-1073: The "official" beginning of "Neo-Confucianism"):

Cosmological theory: *T'ai-chi (Taiji)* 太極 ("the Great Ultimate"), then *yin/yang* 陰陽 and

the "5 Forces" 五行 (like the Han Confucian Tung Chung-shu / Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒)

Deeply influenced by Hua-yen (Huayan) 華嚴 Buddhism.

The goal of practice: "tranquility" (*ching / jing* 靜) and union with the cosmos.

Chang Tsai (Zhang Zai 張載; 1020-1077):

Author of "The Western Inscription"; much in common with Chou, but emphasized that everything shares one essence (*ch'i / qi* 氣: from Mencius and the *Nei-yeh / Neiye* 內業); "enlightenment" comes through "sincerity" (from *Chung-yung*); "universal love" ("would not cut the grass beneath his window").

Ch'eng Hao (Cheng Hao 程顥; 1032-1085) and Ch'eng I (Cheng Yi 程頤; 1033-1107):

Brothers; nephews of Chang Tsai; students of Chou Tun-i; government officials.

No interest in cosmology: the universal principle (*Li* 理, not = *li* 禮, "propriety") is **within our heart/mind** (*hsin / xin* 心), not outside of us.

Later Analysts: Self-cultivation is either rational (Ch'eng I) or moral/intuitive (Ch'eng Hao).

C. THE LATER SUNG DYNASTY CONFUCIAN THINKERS (12th Century)

Chu Hsi (Zhu Xi 朱熹; 1130-1200):

Very conservative rationalist; followed Ch'eng I with minor changes; virtually no original ideas.

To 20th-Century Confucians and 20th-Century Sinology: Chu was hailed as the

founder of "the Ch'eng/Chu (Chengzhu) 程朱 School" (traditionally called *Li-hsüeh /*

Lixue 理學; AKA "the School of 'Principle'" in 20th-Century Sinology). Glorified by

Westernized Confucians (e.g., Wing-tsit Chan 陳榮捷) and the convert Wm. T. deBary—a highly partisan devotee of Chu Hsi whose highly tendentious *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, etc., dishonestly diminished Westerners' appreciation of others, including medieval and modern Taoists and Buddhists; Confucians who rejected the Ch'eng/Chu Orthodoxy (e.g., Li Ao, Lu Hsian-shan, Kao P'an-lung); and all women. To Chan and deBary, Chu Hsi was the norm of "Neo-Confucianism" (a category completely alien to Chinese thought and tradition).

Reason for Historical Importance: During the 13th-century Mongol Conquest of North China, a scholar from the Ch'eng/Chu tradition was captured and taken to the Mongol capital (modern Beijing), where a follower persuaded the Mongols to set up a "national academy." In 1313, the Mongol regime established Chu Hsi's Commentaries on "**The Four Books**" (**the *Analects, Mencius, Ta-hsüeh and Chung-yung***) as the curriculum for all Chinese schoolboys, thus establishing a government **social-control system** to subjugate the conquered Chinese populace (with similar use by later rulers in Japan, Korea, Singapore, etc., as well as by later Chinese emperors).

Lu Hsiang-shan / Lu Xiangshan 陸象山 (also called Lu Chiu-yüan / Lu Jiuyüan 陸九淵: 1139-1193): Debated Chu Hsi at the Goose Lake Temple (1175). Denounced as "crypto-Buddhist" by Chu. Followed Ch'eng Hao: the human heart/mind is "the Tao heart/mind." Regarded as founder of the lesser-known "Lu-Wang 陸王 School" (traditionally called *Hsin-hsüeh / Xinxue* 心學; AKA "the School of 'Mind'" in 20th-c Western Sinology).

D. MING 明 DYNASTY CONFUCIAN THINKERS

Ch'en Pai-sha (Chen Baisha 陳白沙; 1428-1500)

Little-known critic of Ch'eng/Chu orthodoxy; followed Lu Hsiang-shan.

Wang Yang-ming (Wang Yangming 王陽明; 1472-1529; AKA Wang Shou-jen / Shouren 守仁):

A great statesman and general. Had "an enlightenment experience" suddenly one night in 1508, then another a year later. Followed Ch'eng Hao and Lu Hsiang-shan. Taught extending our *innate knowledge of good* (from Mencius) into moral action. So **the individual practitioner is responsible for cultivating what is innate**—an idea that was fundamental to Mencius' thought but caused alarm among Ch'eng/Chu thinkers, who *feared* what individuals might do if left to themselves to cultivate themselves, rather than simply study the classics, as Chu Hsi (and oppressive rulers) wanted. In reality, **Chu Hsi pretended to agree with Mencius but actually believed Hsün-tzu (Xunzi** 荀子); the people who **truly followed Mencius** were Ch'eng Hao and Lu Hsiang-shan.

Lin Chao-en (Lin Zhaoen 林兆恩; 1517-1598):

A teacher, healer, and community leader who added terms from Taoist self-cultivation and Ch'an (Chan) 禪 Buddhism (known in the West as "Zen"—the Japanese pronunciation) to construct a program of "heart/mind-cultivation" designed to feel comfortable to other literati. Had more social influence among "the middle classes" (e.g., merchants, artisans, well-to-do agriculturalists) than among "the elite" at the imperial level or in Confucian schools.

Kao P'an-lung (Gao Panlong 高攀龍; 1562-1626): Criticized Wang, but Emphasized **meditation ("quiet-sitting": *ching-tso / jingzuo* 靜坐)**. Later Confucians who advocated meditation denied the undeniable fact that "**quiet-sitting**" is simply **Ch'an meditation by another name**. Totally ignored by Wing-tsit Chan, deBary, etc. The only Western scholar to publish studies about practitioners of "quiet-sitting" is Prof. Rodney Taylor, who not only translated writings by

Kao P'an-lung but also interviews with practitioners in Japan today, such as the Confucian scholar Okada Takehiko 岡田武彦.

E. CH'ING 清 DYNASTY CONFUCIAN THINKERS

Ku Yen-wu (Gu Yanwu 顧炎武; 1613-1682): Stressed empirical knowledge and practical affairs

Tai Chen (Dai Zhen 戴震; 1723-1777): Stressed “evidential analysis” of classical texts (*k'ao-cheng / kaozheng*); Tai's approach was “academic” in a rather modern sense.

K'ang Yu-wei (Kang Youwei 康有為; 1858-1927): **Experienced enlightenment** during meditation.

Influenced by Western thought, but wanted to restore Confucianism and Chinese tradition. Was given control of the government for “100 Days.” Sought to modernize China and achieve a universal utopia.